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Review of the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report reviews and assesses the extent to which Member States have implemented the agreed conclusions from the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women on the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls. The report summarizes the progress, gaps and challenges relating to action taken at the national level in implementing the agreed conclusions. The current review takes place subsequent to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is in the early stages of implementation. Accordingly, the focus of the review is on action taken to transition to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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I. Introduction

1. At the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Member States agreed on new working methods for the Commission (see Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/6), which included a more rigorous review of the agreed conclusions relating to a priority theme from a previous session in order to encourage the implementation of its outcomes. As part of the review process, the Commission will consider a report on progress made on the theme at the national level.

2. The review theme of the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-first session, in 2017, is "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls". In accordance with its multi-year programme of work for 2010-2014, the Commission had adopted agreed conclusions on that theme at its fifty-eighth session, in 2014 (see E/2014/27-E/CN.6/2014/15, chap. I, sect. A).

3. The review of the implementation of the agreed conclusions is taking place at a time when the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is in the early stages. Given its timing, in addition to assessing the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the focus of the review is on action taken by Member States to transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, the agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session of the Commission of the Status of Women, which provide guidance on the gender-responsive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, serve as reference (see E/2016/27-E/CN.6/2016/22, chap. I, sect. A).

4. The report summarizes the progress, gaps and challenges relating to the implementation of the agreed conclusions at the national level. It also identifies ways to support and achieve their accelerated implementation. The current report will be accompanied by presentations by Member States, on a voluntary basis, of lessons learned, challenges and best practices, at the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

5. The report draws on information received from Member States[1] and other sources, including the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2016/75) and voluntary reviews submitted as part of the high-level political forum convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in 2016, final national and global reports on the Millennium Development Goals and national reports as part of the twentieth anniversary review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.[2]

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[1] Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, China, Colombia, Cuba, Djibouti, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Lithuania, Mexico, Nepal, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo and Turkmenistan.

[2] Available from www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/preparations.

II. Influence and impact of the agreed conclusions on the global normative framework

6. The agreed conclusions of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women have had a significant influence and impact on the global normative framework, in particular on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1). The agreed conclusions reinforced the important linkages between the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In addition, the text makes a clear and strong relationship between development and the human rights of women and girls. Reflecting this, the 2030 Agenda is firmly grounded in human rights and positions the Beijing Platform for Action as a foundational framework for sustainable development.

7. Another major element of the agreed conclusions was its call for a transformative and comprehensive stand-alone goal on gender equality, women's empowerment and the human rights of women and girls, and for gender equality to be mainstreamed throughout all other goals. In the 2030 Agenda, the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment is recognized as "a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets", with a strong stand-alone goal (Goal 5), accompanied by gender-specific targets and indicators across other goals.

8. The agreed conclusions identified critical gender equality issues that were insufficiently addressed in the Millennium Development Goals, signalling priorities for the Sustainable Development Goals. The Commission recognized that progress on the Millennium Development Goals had been limited for women and girls owing to the lack of systematic gender mainstreaming and integration of a gender perspective in the design of the Millennium Development Goals. Compared to the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals reflect a far more comprehensive set of commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

9. Goal 5 has nine targets that address many of the issues identified in the agreed conclusions, including discrimination, violence, harmful practices, unpaid care and domestic work, participation in decision-making, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and rights to economic resources. Examples of gender equality priorities across other goals include access to social protection (Goal 1), addressing the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women (Goal 2), universal health coverage (Goal 3), access to quality education (Goal 4), access to water and sanitation (Goal 6), access to decent work and addressing the gender pay gap (Goal 8), reducing inequalities of outcome (Goal 10), safe public spaces (Goal 11) and inclusive decision-making at all levels (Goal 16).

10. In addition to the gender-specific commitments, the agreed conclusions made further normative advances that are also important elements of the 2030 Agenda. In the agreed conclusions, the Commission noted the universal context of gender equality and recognized that no country had achieved equality for women and girls. In contrast to the Millennium Development Goals, which were an agenda for developing countries, the 2030 Agenda is a universal agenda recognizing the global and interconnected nature of challenges to sustainable development, including

gender inequality. Further, in the agreed conclusions, the Commission expressed concern about the lack of progress for women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination and inequality. While the Millennium Development Goals were focused on national averages, which often hid inequalities, the 2030 Agenda commits to "leave no one behind", requiring a much deeper analysis of the multiple drivers of inequalities.

11. The agreed conclusions recognize the important contributions made by women's organizations and feminist groups in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women. In the actions focused on participation and accountability, the Commission called for the views of women's organizations to be taken into account in the design of the 2030 Agenda. Looking ahead, the 2030 Agenda places emphasis on open, transparent and participatory processes to oversee the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals. This is important, from a gender perspective, in order to ensure the strategic priorities and concerns of women influence decision-making.

12. The actions of the agreed conclusions to strengthen the evidence base have underpinned the global call to increase the production, availability and use of gender statistics. An innovative feature of the agreed conclusions was the call for standards and methodologies to be developed in several areas, including data on women's poverty, income distribution within households, unpaid care work, women's access to, control and ownership of assets and productive resources, and women's participation at all levels of decision-making. Those areas are now visible priorities in the global work on gender statistics at the United Nations, particularly in the context of monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.[3]

III. Context for the implementation of the agreed conclusions

13. The agreed conclusions of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women assessed progress for each Millennium Development Goal from a gender perspective. The Commission noted that while there was progress in some areas of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls, for example in the area of gender parity in education, progress on several Millennium Development Goal targets that are important for gender equality and the empowerment of women was particularly slow, including in increasing women's access to decent work, increasing women's representation in decision-making, reducing maternal mortality and ensuring universal reproductive health and access to sanitation.

14. Subsequent reviews have further confirmed those deeply entrenched gender inequalities, across all countries. The 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (see E/CN.6/2015/3 and E/2015/27-E/CN.6/2015/10) in 2015 found that overall progress towards gender equality has been unacceptably slow, with stagnation and even regression in some areas. For example, women's increasing educational attainment and rising participation in the labour market have not been matched with better conditions of work, prospects for advancement and equal pay, and women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care work. Globally, women are paid

[3] UN-Women, *Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (forthcoming).

24 per cent less than men and women do nearly two and half times more unpaid care and domestic work as men.[4]

15. Assessing the current state of play based on available data, the first report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2016/75) emphasized the global nature of gender inequalities across many domains. For example, in 2013, there were still 757 million adults (aged 15 and over) unable to read and write, of whom two thirds were women. Despite social protection being essential for reducing inequalities and vulnerability, particularly for women, most poor people remain outside social protection systems, particularly in poorer countries.

16. The same report also highlighted unfinished business from the Millennium Development Goals. Between 1990 and 2015, the global maternal mortality ratio declined by 44 per cent, to an estimated 216 deaths per 100,000 live births, falling short of the Millennium Development Goal target and far from the target of 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births established in the Sustainable Development Goals. Violence against women and harmful practices are new areas monitored by the Sustainable Development Goals. Rates of child marriage have declined overall but remain at unacceptable levels, especially in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Violence against women persists at alarmingly high levels across the world.[5]

17. Also in the same report, it was noted that women's participation in decision-making is increasing, albeit at a glacial pace. The proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of parliament rose to nearly 23 per cent in 2016. This represents an average increase of 0.6 percentage points a year since 2006 and a rise of 6 percentage points over a decade (see E/2016/75, para. 45).

18. Persistent and new challenges have affected the implementation of the agreed conclusions. The Commission expressed concern about the ongoing impacts of the economic crisis, of climate change and natural disasters. Three years later, the continuing impacts of the crisis are evident in high levels of youth unemployment, stagnation in female employment in most regions, with the exception of Latin America, pervasive informality of women's work in developing regions[6] and the increasing precariousness of work worldwide. Based on projections by the International Monetary Fund, a second major period of expenditure contraction was predicted in 2016, following the first one in 2010, and expected to have an impact on 132 countries, with developing countries expected to be the most severely

[4] UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (New York, 2015).

[5] World Health Organization, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2013).

[6] See International Labour Organization (ILO), *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2015: Scaling Up Investments in Decent Jobs for Youth* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2015); see also ILO and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*, 2nd ed. (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2013).

affected.[7] Such austerity measures set a challenging economic context for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

19. The past year has also been marked by increased conflict, mass displacement of populations and related humanitarian catastrophes. Global forced displacement is at record numbers. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 65.3 million people were displaced at the end of 2015, compared to 59.5 million just 12 months earlier.[8] At the same time, global military expenditure was $1,776 billion in 2014, which affects the resources available for sustainable development.[9]

20. Against this background, the action areas of the agreed conclusions of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women remain highly relevant for transitioning to the Sustainable Development Goals. The next chapter assesses the action taken by Member States.

IV. National implementation efforts

21. Since the adoption of the agreed conclusions in 2014, Member States have moved to the preparatory stages of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. At this early stage, it is useful to examine how the lessons from the Millennium Development Goals are being reflected in the transition to the Sustainable Development Goals. Like the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals are intended to be implemented primarily at the national level. Translating these commitments into results for women and girls will require a diverse range of policies and interventions, as well as regular and in-depth monitoring of progress in implementation efforts.

22. Overall, the responses from Member States for the present review indicate a varied approach to the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals. Several countries emphasize the Sustainable Development Goals as a priority at the national level (Argentina, Colombia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, Russian Federation, Sweden, Turkmenistan) and have outlined their initial approaches for adapting their national policies and frameworks to the 2030 Agenda. Some countries reaffirmed the importance of integrating gender equality across the three dimensions of sustainable development. Developed countries (Australia, Austria, Finland, Japan, Norway, Sweden) are placing an emphasis on the gender equality commitments in the Sustainable Development Goals in their development cooperation efforts. Both developed and developing countries have provided good practice examples of policy implementation to realize women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights, strengthen the enabling environment, maximize investments in gender equality, strengthen the evidence base and ensure women's participation.

[7] Isabel Ortiz and others, "The decade of adjustment: a review of austerity trends 2010-2020 in 187 countries", Extension of Social Security Working Paper, No. 53 (Geneva, International Labour Office; New York, Columbia University; Geneva, The South Centre, 2015).

[8] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015* (Geneva, 2016).

[9] Data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, available from https://sipri.org/databases/milex (accessed 27 October 2016).

A. Realizing women's and girls' full enjoyment of all human rights

23. The agreed conclusions set out actions necessary to realize women's and girls' full enjoyment of all human rights. The Commission calls for the full implementation of existing international commitments and outlines important actions to address the multiple and intersecting factors contributing to women's and girls' poverty, to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, to ensure the promotion and protection of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work, and to promote rights to education and work. That section of the conclusions also highlights action to benefit particular groups of women and girls.

24. Ensuring the full realization of women's and girls' human rights is vital to achieving progress across the Sustainable Development Goals. When policies and programmes are divorced from human rights and instead focus on basic needs or achieving numerical targets, they can lead to unintended consequences that undermine the overall objective of the policy or goal. One example is the focus on skilled birth attendants in efforts to reduce maternal mortality, rather than a more comprehensive approach to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights that addresses the structural drivers of maternal mortality such as child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, adolescent pregnancy and the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services and information. A further example is the focus on gender parity in education at the expense of attention to the quality of education or girls' safety in the school environment.

25. A comprehensive approach to fulfilling women's and girls' human rights also recognizes the synergies and interdependence between rights. For example, the realization of one right, such as women's right to work, can facilitate the realization of others, such as the right to an adequate standard of living. Conversely, the denial of rights in one area, such as a lack of access to safe and hygienic sanitation, can have an impact upon the enjoyment of other rights, such as the right to health and freedom from violence. Adopting a comprehensive approach to gender equality, grounded in international norms and standards, is particularly important for the wide-ranging 2030 Agenda to maximize the synergies between gender equality and women's empowerment and all the goals.

26. As part of their implementation efforts, Member States are aligning their national gender equality policy frameworks based on the Beijing Platform for Action with the Sustainable Development Goals (as reported by Colombia, Cuba, Greece, the Russian Federation and Sri Lanka), but there is not sufficient evidence that this is a practice across the board. While Goal 5 has been specifically referred to by Member States in the alignment of their national gender equality frameworks, other Sustainable Development Goals have received limited attention.

27. The importance of the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was also noted, by Argentina, Colombia, Cuba and Turkmenistan. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Italy also cited their efforts to implement regional instruments, such as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Recognizing the centrality of peace to sustainable development, several countries have reviewed and developed new approaches to implement Security

Council resolution 1325 (2000) (Georgia, Italy, Japan and Sweden). One innovative approach, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is the implementation of action plans on resolution 1325 (2000) at the local and provincial levels with a focus on human security, rather than the more militarized concept of national security.

28. Legal and constitutional frameworks that guarantee and accelerate progress towards gender equality, along with measures to ensure women's access to justice, are the foundation upon which women's and girls' human rights can be realized. The outcome of the five-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (see General Assembly resolution S-23/3 established 2005 as a target date for the revocation of laws that discriminate against women. Since that deadline has long passed, the Sustainable Development Goals target (5.1) to end all forms of discrimination against all women takes on even greater urgency. Legal reform, to both promote gender equality and remove discrimination, has been a priority for Member States since the adoption of the agreed conclusions. Removing discrimination has been a focus for some countries (Djibouti, the Philippines, Qatar and Togo) in recent years. Areas of reform include laws around marriage, divorce, guardianship, citizenship, inheritance and driving.

29. Introducing or reforming laws on violence against women features strongly in Member States' responses (Albania, Argentina, Azerbaijan, China, Djibouti, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Nepal, Paraguay, Peru and Spain). Violence against women is an area that was neglected in the Millennium Development Goals but is addressed in targets of Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16. Legal reforms in this area include the introduction of new laws that address violence against women in a comprehensive manner in order to criminalize specific forms of violence, namely, domestic violence and sexual harassment, to reform laws to expand or refine the definition of domestic violence or rape, including criminalizing marital rape, and to create state obligations through law to provide services to survivors or to implement programmes to prevent violence before it happens.

30. Another area of law reform is in relation to women's labour rights and economic rights. Several countries have introduced reforms or are considering reforms to improve women's economic rights, including by improving general labour rights and conditions (Argentina and Colombia), outlawing discrimination in the workplace on the basis of sex, pregnancy and marital status (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cuba and Djibouti), enshrining equal pay in law (Colombia and Lithuania) and enhancing maternity leave provisions (Peru and the Philippines). National legal reform efforts to advance women's economic rights could be strengthened by improving minimum wage legislation, promoting women's right to collective bargaining and removing discriminatory provisions to ensure women's equal access to and control over economic resources.

31. Some countries have strengthened or introduced anti-discrimination or gender equality legislation. The introduction of positive duties or obligations (Finland, Lithuania and Norway) in law which create an obligation for governments to take proactive measures to achieve gender equality is a promising practice. Further, legal reforms to expand the definition of discrimination and equality to reflect the concept of substantive equality, or equality of outcomes, are also taking place (Turkmenistan). Some countries have focused on legal and policy measures to address multiple forms of discrimination experienced by specific groups of women,

including women with disabilities (Jamaica), indigenous women (Australia and Paraguay), migrant and displaced women (Georgia and Lithuania), Roma women (Albania and Italy), dalit women (Nepal), widows (Kenya), and women who experience discrimination owing to their sexual orientation and gender identity (Albania, Argentina, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Georgia, Peru and the Philippines). The efforts to respond to multiple forms of discrimination are promising, however there is little information on their effectiveness or results.

32. In addition to laws, countries are implementing a broad range of gender equality policies for women's empowerment and to realize the human rights of women and girls. Several countries report reviewing or developing new national action plans or national programmes on gender equality (Burkina Faso, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Poland, the Russian Federation and Switzerland). More specific policies address issues including gender and health (Kenya), violence against women (Austria, Burkina Faso, Djibouti and Lithuania), economic empowerment (China and Poland), trafficking (Spain), sexual and reproductive health and rights (Finland and Switzerland), unpaid care work (Finland, Sweden and Switzerland) and women's access to social protection (Nepal and Senegal). Member State responses indicate that efforts in certain countries are well under way for adapting the Sustainable Development Goals to their national contexts and pursuing their priorities.

B. Strengthening the enabling environment for gender equality and the empowerment of women

33. The agreed conclusions address factors and conditions in the broader environment that have an influence on gender equality. Provisions are included with regard to ensuring systematic gender mainstreaming across social, economic and environmental policies and actions to ensure that global trade, financial and investment agreements and macroeconomic policies promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Actions called for include the integration of a gender perspective in response to climate change and for women's participation in all aspects of peacebuilding. Actions in support of women in trade, rural women in agriculture and in regard to the role of the media are also included in that section of the conclusions.

34. Systematic gender mainstreaming across the full range of policy areas is vital to ensure that all policy areas contribute to achieving gender equality. This is a particularly pressing concern in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, where nearly all 17 goals have important gender dimensions. In the responses from countries, gender mainstreaming emerges as a key priority for ensuring that gender equality is addressed across a broad range of policy areas. This includes embedding gender equality as a cross-cutting priority in national sustainable development plans (Mexico, Paraguay and Qatar) and making gender mainstreaming a central strategy of gender and development policy (Kenya). Some countries require all government departments to assess the impacts of their policies and programmes on gender equality (Finland and Sweden) and others have appointed gender focal points across government agencies (Jamaica and Paraguay) and set up inter-agency task forces on

gender equality issues (Georgia). There was limited information on the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming strategies or their reach across the 17 goals.

35. National gender equality mechanisms can play a catalytic role in gender mainstreaming by holding other government bodies to account for achieving gender equality commitments. However, the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action found that many national gender equality machineries do not have the authority, the position within the administration or adequate levels of resources to be able to fulfil their essential functions. Some countries have reviewed and strengthened the mandate of their national gender equality machineries in the light of the Sustainable Development Goals (Australia and the Philippines) and others have expanded their institutional frameworks for gender equality by creating gender equality mechanisms at the local level (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Nepal). Other strategies to strengthen gender mainstreaming at the local level include localized gender equality action plans (Georgia) and provincial gender equality assessments (China).

36. Trade regimes can have an influence on gender equality and the empowerment of women. For example, over the past few decades, increasing numbers of women in developing countries have been employed in assembly manufacturing in export processing zones, areas in which labour and environmental standards may not apply in full or may remain unenforced, leaving women vulnerable to poor working conditions.[10] Gender-sensitive trade and employment policies play an important role in reducing the risks and vulnerabilities to which women and girls are exposed and to generate decent work. Only Jamaica reported specifically on national efforts to address gender equality in its trade policy. Some countries have focused on measures to increase women's participation in entrepreneurship (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Italy) as a strategy to strengthen the enabling environment for gender equality. Others have focused on specific strategies such as increasing women's access to technology (China), providing microfinance (Mexico) and focusing on key sectors such as agriculture (Togo).

37. Dominant approaches to macroeconomic policy often focus on raising the level of gross domestic product (GDP) as their primary policy goal. Alternative approaches emphasize well-being, human rights or human development as the objective of economic policies. The 20-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action found that economic policies have either undermined women's social gains, as in the case of austerity measures that threaten to roll back some of the social policy measures that have strengthened women's rights, or failed to support them through access to decent work (see E/CN.6/2016/3). Rather than being gender-neutral, fiscal policies can have a significant influence on reducing inequalities, including gender inequality, as they play a role in redistributing resources through progressive tax systems and investments in services, infrastructure and social protection.[4] Indeed, this objective for economic policy is central to Goal 10 in the 2030 Agenda.

[10] Matthew Amengual and William Milberg, "Economic development and working conditions in export processing zones: a survey of trends", Working paper, No. 3 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2008).

38. In order to create an enabling environment for gender equality and the empowerment of women, several countries have reported prioritizing spending on social policies. As a promising approach, Senegal's economic policy has an explicit focus on reducing social inequality, including gender inequality. Other countries have increased investments in social protection (Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Jamaica), universal pensions (Argentina) and universal health care and universal education (Cuba). Efforts to strengthen the enabling environment could be accelerated by Member States designing economic and social policies in a complementary manner with the specific objective of achieving gender equality and realizing human rights.[4]

C. Maximizing investments in gender equality and the empowerment of women

39. The agreed conclusions call for increased investments, including action to increase resources for gender equality through both domestic resource mobilization and official development assistance (ODA), to fulfil ODA commitments, to institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting, to cost national action plans on gender equality so as to ensure their implementation and to increase funding for women's organizations.

40. The lack of resources dedicated to implementing the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls emerged as a key challenge over the past decade, particularly in the context of the 2008 economic crisis. As well as the lack of resources for specific spending on gender equality policies, the low levels of resources allocated to sectors such as social protection, health, education and water and sanitation continue to pose significant obstacles for achieving gender equality. Analysis based on national budgets of public expenditure in 55 countries in sectors relevant for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (in the areas of agriculture, education, environment, gender, health, social protection and water and sanitation) showed that despite an initial period of increased spending in 2008-2009, spending fell as a percentage of GDP or total expenditure in almost all areas and remained stagnant in one area (water and sanitation), across the majority of countries.[11] With the more ambitious 2030 Agenda, the need to mobilize adequate resources for implementation is even more pressing.

41. The 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development have placed emphasis on the role of domestic resource mobilization as well as the continuing importance of ODA, particularly for the least developed countries. Macroeconomic policies, including tax policy, government expenditures and debt management, directly affect the level of resources that are available to achieve gender equality. Additional domestic resources can be mobilized by improving the efficiency of revenue collection, broadening the range of taxes used to generate

[11] Debbie Budlender, Matthew Martin and Richard Watts, "Tracking and analysing MDG-related and gender-responsive spending during the global recession: methods and data sources", paper presented at the expert group meeting for the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Mexico City, 2013.

revenues, including by requiring corporations to pay their fair share, and borrowing to finance investments that have significant social and economic returns.[12]

42. To monitor the allocation of resources for gender equality, gender-responsive budgeting is the most common approach used by governments to scrutinize the allocation of public resources. In some countries (Albania and Austria), the commitment to gender-responsive budgeting is inscribed in law. Countries have institutionalized gender-responsive budgeting using multiple approaches, including training (Colombia), inter-agency structures (Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Nepal and Togo) and participatory processes (Senegal). Limited information was provided on the extent to which gender-responsive budgeting processes resulted in increased or reprioritized resources for gender equality.

43. Another path taken by countries (Australia, Finland, Norway and Spain) is to require a regular gender analysis of budgets. The Philippines has a requirement of 5 per cent of government expenditure being allocated towards gender and development, and Djibouti has a specific budget for gender equality across several ministries. Some countries report increasing resources for gender equality (Argentina and Mexico) while others recognize the need to do so but are limited in their capacity to undertake it (Jamaica).

44. In an effort to ring-fence resources, countries have set up specific funds for gender equality (Peru) or allocated funds to particular issues, for example women, peace and security (Austria), funds for women's civil society organizations (Bosnia and Herzegovina), violence against women (Georgia) and women's economic empowerment (Sri Lanka). Kenya has introduced an innovative approach, with a requirement that 30 per cent of public procurement be from businesses owned by women, youth and people with disabilities. Some countries (Islamic Republic of Iran) are also pursuing partnerships with the private sector to increase resources for gender equality.

45. Several countries report increased tracking of ODA for gender equality (Australia, Austria, Japan, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland), as well as aligning those funds to the priorities of the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the gender-sensitive targets across other Sustainable Development Goals.

D. Strengthening the evidence-base for gender equality and the empowerment of women

46. The agreed conclusions call for action to improve the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of gender statistics and disaggregated data, to collect data on the minimum set of gender indicators and violence against women indicators, to develop and enhance standards in key areas and to improve national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.

[12] Stephanie Seguino, "Financing for gender equality in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals", UN-Women Discussion Paper Series, No. 11 (New York, UN-Women, 2016).

47. Data and statistics are indispensable tools for informing policies, assessing their impact and ensuring accountability. Given the monitoring requirements of the 2030 Agenda, the need to produce relevant and quality gender-sensitive indicators to monitor progress is now an urgent priority. Significant gaps remain in many areas of gender statistics. For instance, only three of the indicators to monitor Goal 5 have international standards to define statistical concepts and methodologies and adequate country coverage to monitor progress globally. As seen with the Millennium Development Goals, targets for which data are lacking are likely to not be prioritized. The demand for better statistics to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals puts significant pressure on national governments, signalling the need for increased political will and technical and financial support.[13]

48. Most countries have reported advancing their gender statistics work, with many producing regular reports based on a set of gender indicators, which in some cases are aligned with global frameworks such as the Beijing Platform for Action. Data collection is commonly highlighted as a key component of gender equality action plans with specific budget allocations. Countries' plans to address data gaps and improve gender statistics tend to be aligned with their existing national action plans for gender equality. However, in the context of data collection, only some countries highlight their intentions to develop national implementation plans and monitor the Sustainable Development Goals (for example, Cuba).

49. The 2030 Agenda underscores the importance of disaggregated data. Member States are making efforts to improve disaggregated data collection methods to better identify and address multiple forms of discrimination, for example, Albania's focus on Roma and other ethnic minorities, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual and trans women; Australia's focus on people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and women with disabilities; Finland's focus on migrants and refugees; Jamaica's focus on older women, women with disabilities and women living with HIV and AIDS; and Norway's focus on the development of indicators for all grounds of discrimination.

50. Some governments are providing technical and financial capacity-building to their statistical systems by, for instance, appointing new gender focal points and gender statistics coordinators in their national statistical offices (Jamaica and Norway), through newly established inter-agency committees on gender statistics (the Philippines) and internal working groups (Colombia and Cuba), and by fostering collaborations between the national statistical office and gender equality institute (Spain).

51. Member States have taken steps to develop and enhance standards and methodologies to measure gender inequality. Albania, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines, Paraguay, Peru, Spain and Sri Lanka are all prioritizing surveys on violence against women and Argentina piloted a new perception survey on the incidence of different types of violence against women in intimate relationships. Following increased international recognition of the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women and girls, and in the light of Sustainable Development Goal

[13] See UN-Women, information on the programme for better gender statistics for evidence-based localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, May 2016. Available from http://unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/programme-and-technical-assistance.

target 5.4 on recognizing and valuing this work, some countries are improving time-use data collection (Kenya, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and the Philippines).

52. Other countries are enhancing data collection capacities regarding women's assets and entrepreneurship (Georgia), femicide (Argentina), and rural and tribal women (Islamic Republic of Iran). Few Member States have highlighted data collection on women's participation at all levels of decision-making (for example, Paraguay). Many have demonstrated how their data work is aligned with global frameworks more broadly, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Australia), through online portals and surveys that measure progress against the Beijing Platform for Action (Greece and Jamaica), and most recently regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (Kenya, the Philippines and Switzerland). Few governments acknowledge challenges in capacities to enhance standards and methodologies and the need to invest more attention (for example, Burkina Faso).

53. Many Member States produce regular reports and gender equality indexes (Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Finland, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Lithuania, Spain and Sweden), in many cases on a number of key areas, including families, childcare, violence against women, employment and politics (Djibouti and Switzerland), and specific areas, like Australia's new profile of women business operators. Electronic database systems, portals and software tools are being established across countries to evaluate efforts to advance gender equality, including some on such specific areas as violence against women (Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Italy, Peru and Spain). Togo has launched a national gender equality planning and monitoring tool, based on the African Gender and Development Index, and Lithuania launched an electronic map of gender statistics at the local level, looking at the fields of employment, health, education and entrepreneurship.

E. Ensuring women's participation and leadership at all levels and strengthening accountability

54. The agreed conclusions emphasize the importance of women's participation and leadership at all levels and strengthening accountability for effective implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, which remains equally pertinent for the period of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to facilitate this ambition, the agreed conclusions call for action by Member States to ensure women's participation and leadership in all fields and at all levels, including through temporary special measures, and to ensure the participation of women's organizations in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. They highlight the importance of accountability measures for the achievement of gender equality.

55. Women's equal public and political participation and leadership at all levels is critical to sustainable development. However, women's participation and leadership in political and economic decision-making processes remain at very low levels across all regions, whether in local, national or global decision-making forums. General Assembly resolution 66/130 on women and political participation notes that women's marginalization from the political sphere is often a result of discriminatory

laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women. Governments acknowledge such challenges (Burkina Faso), including the persistence of cultural constraints that limit women's access to higher education, property and participation in public decision-making (Togo). Despite these long-standing concerns, Member States recognize the potential for closing such gaps as women gain higher education and social norms and practices change (for example, Sri Lanka).

56. Member State action to ensure women's participation in public and private life has primarily focused on quotas and other affirmative action measures. The vast majority of Member States that provided responses have installed mandatory or voluntary parliamentary and/or local level quotas.[14] The increasing focus on women's representation at the local level is promising, as it will be a new dimension of women's representation tracked by the Sustainable Development Goals. In a few cases, quotas and special measures have been introduced to increase representation in senior positions in the private sector (Italy and Sweden). The introduction of financial incentives for political parties with high percentages of female candidates has had limited success in Georgia, whereas in Mexico, the move from a quota to a legal requirement for political parties to ensure gender parity in nominations at the federal and local levels has helped boost women's political representation. Through the use of quotas in Senegal, gender parity has almost been achieved at the national and local levels. Sweden has achieved gender parity in the public sector. Going a step further to address multiple forms of discrimination in public participation, Kenya has drafted a new bill on affirmative action measures aimed at increasing the representation of women, as well as of youth, people with disabilities, minorities and other marginalized groups.

57. In addition to quotas and other affirmative action measures, Member States have demonstrated many examples of action taken to support the participation of women in decision-making processes. Several governments are adopting new national action plans that aim to increase women's political participation (Australia, Paraguay, Peru and Togo). Paraguay has established a department for addressing the participation of indigenous women, to promote their participation in public policy, and also conducted a nationwide campaign to encourage greater political representation of women in elected positions and municipal elections.

58. The establishment of national gender equality councils (Albania, Argentina and Australia) and consultative dialogues with election committees (the Philippines) are proving effective in supporting female candidates and politicians and allocating spaces for women to influence decision-making equally. The establishment of Islamic councils of cities and villages in the Islamic Republic of Iran was introduced as a strategy to increase women's participation at the local level. Lithuania has established a network of women politicians and women's organizations in all regions that undertake information campaigns, mainly with a focus on economic decision-making. Such actions to create supportive spaces for women in public life are particularly critical given that some countries still report

[14] Albania, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Lithuania, Nepal, Norway, Peru, Poland, Senegal, Spain and Sri Lanka, and such measures are pending in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Greece and Jamaica.

high numbers of cases of political harassment in female candidates' participation in regional and municipal elections (for example, Peru).

59. In order to increase women's participation at the highest levels in the private sector, Norway has established a database that identifies qualified women to fill board seats. Some promising capacity-building programmes are also emerging across regions, including public and private sector leadership, local governance and civil society mobilization training for women (Greece, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nepal, Norway, the Philippines and Spain), and in several cases targeting marginalized women (Azerbaijan and Nepal). Sweden has formed a national expert group on gender equality in academia to address male predominance in this field and has adopted recruitment objectives to be achieved by 2017.

60. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, some countries are taking steps to ensure women's involvement in working groups to design national implementation plans, including with civil society organizations (Finland and Jamaica). One promising practice from the Philippines was a series of participatory workshops to localize the 2030 Agenda, involving women's organizations. Cuba has taken a gender mainstreaming approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals by focusing on increasing women's participation and leadership in environmental conservation, risk management and disaster prevention. Open, inclusive and participatory structures where civil society, including women's organizations, can shape and influence priorities and policies are critical for ensuring that gender equality features as a priority, as implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals accelerates.

61. Recognizing the commitment to support women's equal political participation in all contexts, including in times of peace and conflict, several Member States are taking action to promote women's roles and leadership in humanitarian action, including in conflict prevention and efforts to ensure peace and security (Colombia and Sweden).

V. Conclusions, recommendations and future priorities

62. Member States have taken important steps to implement the wide-ranging actions of the agreed conclusions of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Key lessons from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals have been prioritized in the early stages of the Sustainable Development Goals, such as addressing gender equality concerns beyond the targets of the Millennium Development Goals, mainstreaming gender equality across all policy areas and investing in gender statistics to monitor progress. However, overall implementation of the agreed conclusions has been uneven across the recommendations, with limited focus on the effectiveness of actions.

63. Looking forward to accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, a comprehensive approach to implementation should be pursued that recognizes the synergies and interdependence between different dimensions of gender equality and addresses the links between Goal 5 and all other Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, greater effort is needed to address gender equality in the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

64. Governments should expand legal reform to implement a full range of measures to achieve substantive equality for women, focusing on achieving equality of outcomes. National implementation should build on the lessons from the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. As a practical step, governments should draw on the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as well as their reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in developing implementation plans for the 2030 Agenda and previous agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women.

65. Multiple and intersecting discrimination emerges as a focus for governments and is particularly pertinent for ensuring no one is left behind in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. That commitment in the 2030 Agenda emphasizes that all goals and targets should be met for all nations, all peoples and all segments of society. Alongside Goal 10, which has a focus on inequalities, the emphasis on reaching the most marginalized groups and tackling inequalities of different kinds is a distinct feature of the 2030 Agenda.

66. Much of the focus of Member States' actions to address multiple forms of discrimination against women has been on data disaggregation, legal protections or specific programmes targeted to different groups of women. Those strategies are promising and important, however, greater focus is needed on policies that address the structural, power and political dynamics that push particular groups further behind and deepen inequalities.[15] Such policy areas include macroeconomic frameworks, trade and investment policies, labour policies, redistributive policies, including universal social protection and services, as well as anti-discrimination legislation.[16] Rather than pursuing targeted policies, such as specific social transfers or services for particular groups, universal and targeted policy measures can work in tandem to ensure access for groups that have been historically excluded while also building universal health or education systems that are collectively financed and used by all social groups.[17]

67. While governments are increasingly adopting gender-responsive budgeting to allocate resources and monitor public expenditure on gender equality, ensuring adequate resources for implementing gender equality commitments in the 2030 Agenda presents an immense challenge, particularly for developing countries. In 2014, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimated that developing countries face an annual investment gap of $2.5 trillion in sectors relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals. The lack of adequate resources for the implementation of national action plans on gender equality and other gender equality policies is a significant challenge across all countries, irrespective of the

[15] See Valerie Esquivel, "Power and the Sustainable Development Goals: a feminist analysis", *Gender and Development*, vol. 24, No. 1 (March 2016), pp. 9-23, and Shahra Razavi, "The 2030 Agenda: challenges of implementation to attain gender equality and women's rights", ibid., pp. 25-41.

[16] Naila Kabeer, *Can the MDGs provide a pathway to social justice? The challenge of intersecting inequalities* (New York, United Nations Development Programme, 2010).

[17] Ibid. See also Thandika Mkandawire, "Targeting and universalism in poverty reduction", Social Policy and Development Programme Paper, No. 23 (Geneva, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2005).

level of development. While gender-responsive budgeting can support the effective and efficient allocation and spending of available resources for women and girls, the impact of such allocations will be limited when overall budgets for gender equality policies and the provision of services, social protection and infrastructure are grossly inadequate.

68. Greater attention is urgently needed on strategies and measures to mobilize additional resources for gender equality, including through progressive income and wealth taxes and closing tax loopholes. Investments need to be prioritized across all sectors, including social protection, infrastructure, agriculture, health, education, justice, care services and water and sanitation. Gender equality-focused ODA remains important, particularly for developing countries, but other avenues of global resource mobilization, including global taxes, can also play a role.

69. The 2030 Agenda places a strong emphasis on national ownership and, as such, accountability for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals lies primarily at the national level. The responses from Member States were limited in providing information on accountability mechanisms related to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. From a gender perspective, gender mainstreaming was confirmed as a key strategy employed by governments to ensure that gender equality commitments are addressed across all policy areas, and dovetails with the call for systematic gender mainstreaming in implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Yet, there was insufficient information available on how gender perspectives are integrated into national sustainable development strategies and plans. At the same time, key institutions and mechanisms for promoting gender equality, such as national gender equality mechanisms and national human rights institutions, remain underresourced. Governments must strengthen gender equality mechanisms and make gender equality a priority in setting up institutions, structures and whole-of-government approaches for implementing and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals. This also includes greater investments in gender statistics to ensure that progress for women and girls can be effectively monitored.

70. Women's organizations will play a critical role in ensuring that global commitments are translated into national priorities. Comparative research on 70 countries over four decades recognizes the role of autonomous feminist organizations in advancing women's rights as the most critical factor in the implementation of gender equality policies.[18] Yet there are constraints on the ability of civil society to hold governments accountable, including through widespread threats and restrictions.[19] It will be crucial to enable spaces for the effective participation of women's civil society organizations in all aspects of decision-making related to the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals.

71. The Sustainable Development Goals represent a bold and comprehensive agenda for achieving human rights, peace and security and sustainable development, with gender equality at its core. Turning those commitments into results requires

[18] Mala Htun and Laurel Weldon, "The civic origins of progressive policy change: combating violence against women in global perspective, 1975-2005", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 106, No. 3 (August 2012), pp. 548-569.

[19] CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, *State of Civil Society Report 2016* (executive summary) (Johannesburg, 2016).

renewed commitment, increased resources, creativity and policy innovation, as a matter of priority. The agreed conclusions of the fifty-eighth session provide a foundational set of actions to support all stakeholders in such efforts. Together with the Political Declaration adopted at the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and its six implementation strategies as part of the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (resolution 59/1 of the Commission) and the agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session of the Commission, there is a clear road map for gender-responsive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.[20] States should urgently accelerate implementation efforts to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda of creating an equal world where women and girls are empowered and enjoy their human rights.

[20] UN-Women, *Driving the Gender-responsive Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (New York, 2016).

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Discussion guide for the ministerial round tables to be held under the priority theme "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work"

Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2015/6, on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council decided that the session of the Commission would include a ministerial segment to reaffirm and strengthen political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as their human rights, and to ensure high-level engagement and the visibility of the deliberations of the Commission, and that the segment would include ministerial round tables or other high-level interactive dialogues.

2. In accordance with the multi-year programme of work of the Commission, as contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 2016/3, the Commission will consider "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work" as its priority theme for the sixty-first session, to be held in 2017. Further to that decision, it is proposed that, at that session, the Commission hold ministerial round tables to provide ministers with opportunities for high-level engagement on key issues arising under the priority theme.

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II. Organizational matters

A. Theme and topics

3. Under the priority theme "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work", the Commission will hold four ministerial round tables, on the following topics:

(a) Gender pay gaps in the public and private sectors: how can equal pay for work of equal value be achieved in the changing world of work?

(b) Technology changing the world of work: how can technology and innovation be harnessed to accelerate women's economic empowerment?

(c) Informal and non-standard work: what policies can effectively support women's economic empowerment?

(d) Full and productive employment and decent work for all: how can Sustainable Development Goal 8 be realized for women by 2030?

4. The ministerial round tables should focus on an exchange of experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the proposed topics. Ministers will be encouraged to look ahead towards realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as their human rights. Ministers will be encouraged to highlight the steps and measures that are necessary and planned in order to ensure that national responses effectively contribute to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and to the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

B. Participants

5. The ministerial round tables will provide ministers attending the sixty-first session of the Commission with the opportunity to engage in dialogue and discussion. They will be open to all Member States and observers.

6. Ministers are invited to indicate, in advance and preferably no later than 28 February 2017, the ministerial round table in which they would prefer to participate, with one backup option. Approximately 15 to 20 ministers are expected to participate in each round table. The Chairs of the ministerial round tables will have a list of ministers who have signed up for each round table, but no list of speakers will be prepared in advance.

C. Times and locations

7. The ministerial round tables will be held at Headquarters in New York on Monday, 13 March 2017, from 3 to 6 p.m., at the times set out below. The locations of the conference rooms will be announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*, closer to the date of the opening of the session.

Round table	*Time*	*Location*
Gender pay gaps in the public and private sectors: how can equal pay for work of equal value be achieved in the changing world of work?	3-4.30 p.m.	Conference room ___
Technology changing the world of work: how can technology and innovation be harnessed to accelerate women's economic empowerment?	4.30-6 p.m.	Conference room ___
Informal and non-standard work: what policies can effectively support women's economic empowerment?	3-4.30 p.m.	Conference room ___
Full and productive employment and decent work for all: how can Sustainable Development Goal 8 be realized for women by 2030?	4.30-6 p.m.	Conference room ___

8. The Chairs of the ministerial round tables will guide the discussion with a view to promoting interactivity. Interventions will not exceed three minutes, and an emphasis will be placed on dialogue. Ministers will be encouraged to ask questions and comment on interventions made during the dialogue. Time permitting, ministers may be given the opportunity to make more than one intervention. Written statements are strongly discouraged.

D. Outcome

9. The outcomes of the ministerial round tables will be in the form of Chairs' summaries.

III. Items for discussion in the ministerial round tables

A. Background

10. The priority theme of the sixty-first session of the Commission, in 2017, is "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work". The context for the session is shaped by the twentieth anniversary and global review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its outcome, set out in Commission on the Status of Women resolution 59/1 (see E/2015/27); the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

11. The Beijing Platform for Action focuses on women's economic rights and independence, and on the key linkages between women's economic empowerment and their voice, agency and decision-making in the private and public spheres. The

Platform for Action emphasizes equal access to resources and employment under appropriate working conditions, the elimination of discrimination and segregation at work and the harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men. The 20-year review of its implementation in 2015 brought renewed attention to the situation of women in the world of work, and to the need to accelerate the closing of gender gaps therein.

12. Globally, the gender gap in labour force participation is persistent and striking. Half of women are in the labour force, compared with more than three quarters of men, reflecting the overall stagnation of women's participation in the labour force since the 1990s. Those women who are in the labour force experience gender-based sectoral and occupational segregation and differences in working time, which contribute to a global gender wage gap of 24 per cent. The disproportionate time and effort women spend on unpaid care and domestic work remains a constraint on their capacity to engage in paid work, pursue educational opportunities, participate fully in community life and realize their rights and well-being.

13. Eight years after the global financial crisis, economic recovery continues to be uneven and uncertain in parts of the world. Slower than expected growth rates are contributing to higher than expected unemployment, with serious consequences for young people, particularly young women. At the same time, the world of work is being transformed by globalized capital flows, technological and digital developments and the increasing mobility and informality of labour that link developed and developing regions. Those changes form the broader context for women's economic empowerment.

14. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda affirm the crucial importance of achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, sustained and inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment, decent work for all and equal pay for work of equal value. Gender equality and women's economic empowerment are prerequisites for sustainable development and inclusive and equitable growth. Access to decent, good-quality paid work is the most important factor in economic empowerment, allowing women greater agency and economic independence, and enhancing women's access to resources and participation in decision-making in the household and in the wider community and economy.[1]

15. During the round tables, ministers will be invited to discuss the questions below and to focus on what needs to be done to accelerate the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to realize women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work. Ministers are encouraged to identify effective policies, what needs to be done and who will take the required steps and measures. Ministers are also encouraged to make use of the present discussion guide and to consult the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme for the sixty-first session (E/CN.6/2017/3).

[1] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (New York, 2015).

B. Discussion guide

Gender pay gaps in the public and private sectors: how can equal pay for work of equal value be achieved in the changing world of work?

16. Sixty-five years after the adoption of the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), of the International Labour Organization, gender pay gaps remain pervasive across all regions and sectors. Despite the advances in many parts of the world in securing formal employment for women and raising their educational levels, sometimes to levels that exceed those of men, gender pay gaps characterize all labour markets. The gender pay gap, defined as the gap in average wages paid to women compared with those paid to men, is a major cause of an overall lifetime income gap between men and women. Women are systematically paid less than men for work of equal value. The gender pay gap is estimated to be 24 per cent globally. Although it varies in size, it is persistent in all countries. At every level of education, women on average earn less than men. These gender gaps reflect different treatment in the labour market as a result of discrimination, occupational segregation and greater constraints on women when it comes to balancing paid work and family responsibilities. Where women are concentrated in the informal economy, which is the case for most women workers around the globe, the challenge of achieving equal remuneration is greater because it would involve extending formal employment status and protections to those who work informally.[2]

17. In some countries, increasing the minimum wage has had a significant impact on gender pay gaps. Other countries have taken steps to enact legislation that prohibits discrimination against women in hiring, training and promotion, and to repeal laws that restrict women's access to certain occupations. Other measures include improving the valuation of women's work through strengthening legal and collective regulation and undertaking gender pay audits. Yet other measures involve increasing public sector employment for women, since research indicates that the gender pay gap is greater in the private sector than in the public sector.

18. Ministers are invited to discuss the following questions during the dialogue:

(a) What are examples of effective national laws, policies and regulations that have helped to reduce gender pay gaps?

(b) What steps can Governments take to ensure that women are paid the same as men for work of equal value in the private sector?

(c) How have measures to eliminate gender-based labour market discrimination and occupational segregation or to promote better work-life balance contributed to reducing gender pay gaps?

Technology changing the world of work: opportunities and challenges for women's economic empowerment

19. Technological and digital developments, for example, automation, robotics, 3D printing and connectivity, are transforming the world of work. The digital acceleration of the production of and trade in goods and services globally has been

[2] International Labour Organization, *Women at Work: Trends 2016* (Geneva, 2016).

facilitated by the more than 7 billion mobile phone subscriptions, 2.3 billion people with smartphones and 3.2 billion people connected to the Internet, including 1.3 billion women. These have also facilitated access by women and men in different sectors and at various income levels to banking, financial and information services. Mobile phone access is credited with spurring women's entrepreneurship in many countries. Even so, gender gaps exist. More than 3 billion people in low- and middle-income countries do not own mobile phones; 1.7 billion of them are women. A worldwide gender gap of 12 per cent in Internet use was found in 2016; the gap was 30.9 per cent in the least developed countries.[3]

20. The potential disappearance of jobs through technological change and automation is a source of concern. Some estimates indicate that more than 7 million jobs are at risk in the world's largest economies over the next five years, principally in office and administrative services, manufacturing and production, and health care. In this scenario, women will lose jobs, since they are less likely to be employed in sectors in which the adoption of new technology will create jobs, resulting in a widening of the gender gap. It is anticipated that women will lose five jobs for every job gained; by comparison, men will lose three jobs for every job gained. Women's relatively low participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics professions, in which jobs are expected to be created, results in women standing to gain only one new job in those professions for every 20 lost in other areas, whereas the ratio for men is one new job for every four lost elsewhere.[4]

21. Digital fluency may help to close some gender gaps. If the pace at which women become frequent users of digital technologies is doubled, the workplace could reach gender equality much faster than many current estimates predict. High instability in the supply of skilled labour across all job categories is a major recruitment challenge, especially for job openings requiring basic literacy in digital technologies or science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Given women's rising education levels in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in some countries, women could have significant potential in the global workforce. While men outscored women in digital fluency in all countries, that gap is narrowing and digital fluency could support educational attainment, as well as advancement in the workplace, for both women and men.[5]

22. Ministers are invited to discuss the following questions during the dialogue:

(a) What are examples of national policies that have increased access by women to digital and mobile technologies for economic empowerment, including by women in remote areas and/or in the lowest income quintile?

(b) What measures have been taken in both the public and private sectors to channel technological and digital changes to create jobs for women?

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[3] International Telecommunications Union, *Measuring the Information Society Report 2016* (Geneva, 2016); and GSMA Connected Women, "Bridging the gender gap: mobile access and usage in low- and middle-income countries" (2015).

[4] World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution* (Geneva, 2016).

[5] Julie Sweet, "Access to digital technology accelerates global gender equality", *Harvard Business Review* (17 May 2016).

(c) How can Governments encourage public and private investment in increasing women's digital fluency and literacy in science, technology, engineering and mathematics?

Informal and non-standard work: what policies can effectively support women's economic empowerment?

23. Over the past two decades, the informal economy has come to dominate the world of work in both developing and developed countries (where it may be called "non-standard work"). The informal economy encompasses more than half the workforce worldwide, and women are overrepresented in it around the globe; in developing countries, the informal sector is the primary source of employment for women. While a defining feature of informal employment is the lack of social protection and labour rights, for women workers it is also marked by occupational segregation, gender wage gaps, unequal access to resources and disproportionate burdens of unpaid care and domestic work. Paid domestic work, home-based work, street vending and waste-picking are all sectors dominated by women; they also tend to be the most vulnerable and precarious forms of informal employment. Women comprise more than 80 per cent of homeworkers (industrial outworkers), 30-90 per cent of street vendors and 83 per cent of the world's 53 million domestic workers. Globally, 57 per cent of domestic workers (29.7 million individuals) have no limitations on their working hours.[6]

24. In developed countries, non-standard employment arrangements are increasing and a large proportion of the workforce receives limited benefits and social protection. Part-time employment, one of the forms of non-standard work, ranges between 25 and 37 per cent in selected Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries; the aftermath of the global financial crisis showed an increase in involuntary part-time employment. Working part-time is often described as a choice women make to spend time on domestic and care responsibilities, and is thus considered "voluntary". However, social norms, cultural constraints and the extent of public support for childcare, health care and basic income security for children determine the degree to which women choose part-time work and reduced earnings. Occupational segregation, including stereotyping of part-time jobs as "women's work", means that some women who need to work full-time may only be able to obtain part-time jobs.[7] An emerging area of non-standard employment is the on-demand and gig economy, which operates through online platforms that connect firms with workers, potentially on a global basis.

25. Measures to make informal employment more economically viable and to provide social protection are therefore a priority for tackling gender gaps and advancing women's economic empowerment. This requires a multifaceted approach that considers the specific circumstances in different parts of the informal economy. Labour market interventions such as minimum wages can be extended and enforced for some women informal workers, such as those working in domestic service,

[6] International Labour Organization (ILO) and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*, 2nd ed. (Geneva, ILO, 2013).

[7] International Labour Organization, *Non-Standard Employment around the World: Understanding Challenges, Shaping Prospects* (Geneva, 2016).

home-based work and small enterprises. Social protection schemes, including universal systems and social protection floors, along with measures such as universal health coverage, non-contributory pensions, maternity and parental leave, basic income security for children and public works programmes, are all policy options that have been applied in different countries.

26. Ministers are invited to discuss the following questions during the dialogue:

(a) What measures are Governments taking to address the rising informality and non-standard forms of work and create favourable environments for all women workers?

(b) What steps are Governments taking to extend social protection coverage to women workers in the informal economy?

(c) How can part-time work be regulated to provide both flexibility for women workers and basic childcare, health care and income security?

Full and productive employment and decent work for all: how can Sustainable Development Goal 8 be realized for women by 2030?

27. The aim of Sustainable Development Goal 8 is to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all". It is estimated that over 600 million new jobs, or around 40 million per year, need to be created by 2030 just to keep pace with the growth of the global working age population. Conditions also need to be improved for the 780 million women and men who are working but not earning enough to lift themselves and their families out of poverty and earn more than $2 a day.[8]

28. Jobs in small and medium-sized enterprises account for half of formal employment worldwide; in developing countries, they comprise largest share of employment. While women entrepreneurs account for a third of businesses in the formal economy worldwide, the majority in developing and emerging economies are microenterprises and small enterprises in the informal economy, with little growth potential. Entrepreneurship can be an important vehicle for women's economic empowerment, leading to improved income and contributing to poverty reduction at the household and community levels. Yet, discriminatory social norms and family responsibilities can prevent women from even starting a business. Structural barriers, such as discriminatory property and inheritance laws, and other policies and regulations inhibit women's entrepreneurship, restricting their access to markets, financial services and products, infrastructure, procurement opportunities and social protection.

29. Policies to generate employment generally target the private sector as the main engine for employment growth, but the public sector is also an important source of jobs. Furthermore, it provides services that benefit both the economy and society more broadly. Women working in the public sector are concentrated in health, education and care services, which both support and reduce women's unpaid care and domestic work. Among the policy options available to Governments to increase the number of decent jobs for women are those which stimulate economic activity

[8] International Labour Organization, "Decent work and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", available from http://ilo.org/global/topics/sdg-2030/lang--en/index.htm.

and increase the demand for labour, and investments in public services to create decent jobs in health, education, child and elder care, public administration and agricultural extension services.

30. Ministers are invited to discuss the following questions during the dialogue:

(a) What measures are Governments taking to stimulate public provision of full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men?

(b) What kinds of incentives and regulations have encouraged the private sector to create decent work for women?

(c) How can Governments encourage women's entrepreneurship in the context of decent work? What policies have successfully removed structural barriers and enabled women to access finance, technology, markets, procurement opportunities, skills development and social protection?

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Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2016/4, highlights the situation of Palestinian women for the period from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016, and provides an overview of the assistance provided by the entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; the rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

* E/CN.6/2017/1.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2016/4 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2016/6), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-first session a report, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women on the basis of information from the United Nations entities in the State of Palestine.

3. Unless indicated otherwise, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women. It includes contributions from the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). It also includes information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

4. The present report complements other reports on the living and socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people (see A/71/87-E/2016/67, A/71/359-S/2016/732, A/71/86-E/2016/13 and A/71/13).

II. Situation of Palestinian women

5. The reporting period witnessed substantial efforts by the international community to advance peace and to preserve the two-State solution. The Middle East Quartet Principals met on 23 October 2015 in Vienna and called for significant steps to be taken by the parties, consistent with the transition contemplated by prior agreements, in order to restore confidence and hope in the viability of a negotiated two-State solution that resolves the final status issues, including that of Jerusalem, and ends the occupation that began in 1967. In accordance with its decision on

12 February 2016, the Quartet issued a report in July[1] outlining three negative trends imperilling the viability of the two-State solution: violence against civilians and the incitement that fuels it; the Israeli policy of expanding settlements, the taking of land for exclusive Israeli use and denying Palestinian development; and the situation in Gaza, marked by the lack of Palestinian unity, continued militant activity and a dire humanitarian crisis, augmented by a restrictive closure regime. It offered recommendations for creating the conditions for an eventual return to meaningful negotiations, and called on the parties to take action independently, in line with their commitments under previous agreements, that can realistically contribute to progress towards establishing a two-State reality on the ground.

6. Meanwhile, on 17 May 2016, the President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, called on Israeli, Palestinian and Arab leaders to take historic steps for peace, expressing the readiness of Egypt to contribute to these endeavours and to help facilitate intra-Palestinian reconciliation. On 3 June, France hosted a Ministerial meeting at which participants from 28 delegations reaffirmed support for a two-State solution and discussed ways in which the international community could contribute to this goal, including by providing incentives. In follow-up, France expressed its intention of convening an international conference, now planned for early 2017. The possibility of a direct meeting between the parties has also been advanced by other key international stakeholders.

7. The rates of settlement planning and construction rose during the reporting period. The first three quarters of 2016 saw a 25 per cent increase in construction starts over the equivalent period in 2015, owing to a spike during the second quarter of 2016 registering the highest quarterly rate in three years. The classification of new "state land" in the Jordan Valley, the approval of several plans in settlements and a surge in demolitions of Palestinian structures in Area C of the West Bank during the first quarter also appear to reflect a systematic policy to expand Israeli presence and limit Palestinian development in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Since 1 April, settlement plans have been advanced for at least 2,400 units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israel also advanced the so-called retroactive "legalization" of outposts, and, since July, Members of Knesset have resumed efforts to promote a bill aimed at legalizing settlement units built on privately owned Palestinian land.

8. The absence of Palestinian reconciliation impedes efforts to achieve a negotiated solution. In reconciliation talks between Fatah, Hamas and other Palestinian factions, which were hosted by Qatar in 2016, as well as efforts by Egypt and other regional stakeholders, no consensus has been reached on achieving genuine Palestinian unity on the basis of non-violence, democracy and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Principles — crucial for reuniting the West Bank and Gaza under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian authority. The parties remain divided on two main issues: the formation of a national unity Government based on PLO principles, and the organization of parliamentary and presidential elections. Municipal council elections, which were originally set for 8 October 2016, with the participation of nearly all major Palestinian factions, were to be the first simultaneous elections in Gaza and the West Bank since 2006. However, on 4 October, the Palestinian Government decided to postpone local

[1] S/2016/595, annex.

elections until further notice. That decision followed the suspension on 8 September of election preparations by the High Court in Ramallah.

9. The reporting period saw a sharp increase in violence, in the last quarter of 2015, in East Jerusalem, with protests, clashes and individual attacks by Palestinians on Israeli civilians and security personnel spreading to the other parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including to the access restricted areas in Gaza, and Israel. Palestinians continued to be subjected to threats to their lives, physical safety and liberty from conflict-related violence and from policies and practices related to the Israeli occupation, including settler violence. In the last quarter of 2015, the highest number of casualties among West Bank Palestinians and among Israelis since 2005 was recorded. The violence began to wane in early 2016, owing in large part to effective efforts by the Palestinian National Security Forces, who successfully thwarted attacks, seized weapons and arrested suspected extremists. Continued security coordination between both sides was also key to reducing violence. There nevertheless remains a growing concern that ongoing settlement activity, incitement to violence, cases of excessive use of force by Israel and the absence of genuine Palestinian unity may lead to a renewed escalation.

10. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016, 235 Palestinians (168 men, 14 women, 48 boys and 5 girls) were killed and over 16,556 (82 per cent men, 1 per cent women, 19 per cent boys and 1 per cent girls) were injured, mainly by the Israel Defense Forces or by settlers to some extent across the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel. Many of the Palestinians were killed while carrying out, or reportedly carrying out, knife, gun or car-ramming attacks. A total of 32 Israelis (25 men, 6 women and 1 girl), most of whom were members of the Israel Defense Forces, were killed by Palestinians, and more than 341 others were injured.

11. Among the main concerns relating to the increase in violence were Palestinian attacks on Israelis and the response of Israeli security forces, including possible instances of excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings. These concerns were compounded by the chronic lack of accountability and effective remedy for the killing of Palestinians. For example, from October 2015 to June 2016, the Israeli authorities opened a total of 24 criminal investigations into incidents resulting in the death or injury of Palestinians in the West Bank and Israel, including the highly controversial apparent extrajudicial killing on 24 March 2016 of a reported assailant who was incapacitated. Of these investigations, one has led to the indictment and prosecution of a soldier.

12. The Palestinian Government launched an investigation into the apparent extrajudicial execution while in police custody by Palestinian security forces on 23 August 2016 of a Nablus man who was suspected of involvement in the previous killing of two security personnel. Questions remain regarding accountability for such acts.

13. UNICEF reported a concerning number of incidents of grave violations against children documented in 2015 and 2016. From October 2015 to September 2016, 3,205 incidents were documented, affecting 61,667 children. This included the killings of 57 children (56 Palestinian children — 7 girls and 49 boys — and 1 Israeli girl) and injury of 2,384 children (2,271 Palestinian boys and 113 girls, and 7 Israeli boys and 2 girls). In addition, 448 attacks on schools were documented.

14. As at August 2016, an estimated 11,700 Gazan families (almost 60,000 people) — of which about 10 per cent are female-headed households — remained displaced and are living with host families, in rented apartments, in prefabricated units, or in the rubble of their previous homes.[2] The root causes of the conflict remained unaddressed as the land, air and sea closures of Gaza entered their eleventh year. Accountability for victims remains unaddressed and, as local non-governmental organizations and legal aid providers report, access to justice mechanisms remains severely limited.[3] The Israeli authorities received complaints relating to approximately 360 incidents, which led to the opening of 31 criminal investigations and indictments in a single instance of looting.

15. A fragile ceasefire in Gaza continues to hold. The beginning of May saw the most serious escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas since the 2014 conflict, with the discovery by Israel of two tunnels and, as a response, nine incursions to destroy them. Militants fired some 45 mortars and rockets at Israel and the Israel Defense Forces conducted 13 airstrikes: one woman was killed and several other Palestinians were injured during the exchanges. On 21 August, two rockets were fired from Gaza, without causing injury or damage. Israeli forces responded with some 60 missiles and shells to various locations in Gaza, directed at Hamas bases and those of other militants. Five people were reported injured during the operation. These incidents highlight the fragility of the security dynamics in Gaza and the need for all sides to vigorously uphold the ceasefire.

16. The reporting period also saw a massive surge in demolitions by the Israeli authorities of Palestinian property in the West Bank, primarily in Area C and East Jerusalem, citing a lack of building permits. Such permits are almost impossible to obtain owing to the seemingly discriminatory and unlawful planning regime applied in those areas. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016, the authorities demolished or confiscated 971 Palestinian-owned structures, displacing over 1,500 people and affecting the livelihoods of more than 6,500 people.

17. Several factors continue to present significant barriers to freedom of movement and access to livelihoods for Palestinians, with differing impacts on women and men. The population of 1.9 million Palestinians in Gaza remains effectively isolated from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, by the continued closure of Gaza by Israel and the highly infrequent opening of the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza. Access to East Jerusalem remains limited for Palestinian residents from the remainder of the West Bank. Physical and administrative restrictions continue to impede humanitarian access to some of the most vulnerable communities in Area C, particularly those in the firing zones and those located behind the barrier.

18. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the Palestinian labour force reached 1.3 million in 2015, 3.5 per cent higher than in 2014. With a concurrent 3.4 per cent increase in the population aged 15 and above, the labour

[2] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Gaza: two years since the 2014 hostilities (August 2016).

[3] See, for example, Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, "Update: no reparations in Israel for Palestinians: how Israel's amendment No. 8 leaves no room for room for recourse, Gaza, December 2015" (24 February 2016), available from http://mezan.org/en/post/20954.

force participation rate remained unchanged at 45.8 per cent (71.9 per cent for men, 19.1 per cent for women). The labour force participation of women remains extremely low by global as well as by regional standards, despite high levels of educational attainment on the part of Palestinian women, resulting in a substantial loss of economic potential. The overall rate of unemployment eased slightly, from 27 per cent in 2014 to 25.9 per cent in 2015 (336,300 people), owing to improvement in male employment. The unemployment rate for women increased only slightly, to 39.2 per cent (from 38.55 per cent, as recorded in 2014). In Gaza, women's unemployment rose to a staggering 60 per cent. A gender wage gap persisted, with the average daily wage for Palestinian women reaching NIS 81.9, compared with NIS 108 for men.[4] The unemployment rate for youth aged 20-24 years stood high in 2015, at 36.5 per cent,[5] and rose further, to 42.6 per cent, in 2016.[6]

19. Women's access to health services was monitored and analysed in 2015 and 2016 through analysis by WHO of permit data disaggregated by sex for patients seeking access out of Gaza and the West Bank to medical facilities in East Jerusalem and elsewhere. Health access through the Erez checkpoint declined sharply in 2016, as the approval rates in the first seven months of the year decreased to 74.8 per cent for females and to 66.2 per cent for males, the lowest rates recorded since 2009. This signified a 12 per cent drop in approval rates for both female and male patients, as compared with a similar period in 2015.[7] According to data provided by the Coordination Office of the Ministry of Health in Gaza, in 2015, 25 per cent of patients requested for Israeli security interviews in the context of permit applications were female. In 2016, the percentage of females rose to 33 per cent.

20. The adolescent birth rate (the fertility rate for women aged 15-19) remained concerning, at 48 per 1,000 (35 per 1,000 in the West Bank and 66 per 1,000 in Gaza). Among women aged 20-24, 22 per cent had had at least one live birth before age 18 (25 per cent in Gaza and 20 per cent in the West Bank).

21. Lack of access to safe, sufficient and affordable water remains of critical concern. In Gaza, only 10 per cent of households have access to clean drinking water.[8] It is estimated that at least 96 per cent of the water from the coastal aquifer in Gaza is unfit for human consumption.[9] In the West Bank, 97 per cent of households have access to clean drinking water;[10] however the quantity of water

[4] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey (2016b) and consumer price index data (2016e).

[5] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, press release, 25 February 2016.

[6] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force survey, press release, 8 August 2016.

[7] See www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/documents/WHO_monthly_Gaza_access_report-July_2016-_final.pdf?ua=1.

[8] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Palestinian multiple indicator cluster survey 2014" (2015).

[9] WHO, "Report of a field assessment of health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, 22 March to 1 April 2015" (2016).

[10] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Palestinian Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 (2015).

supply remained insufficient.[11] Around 70 per cent of the Palestinian communities located entirely or mostly in Area C are not connected to a water network and the Government of Palestine has limited ability to provide access to water. The average domestic consumption rate among Palestinians is approximately 40 litres per capita per day in Area C: well below the WHO minimum recommendation of 100 litres per capita per day.[12] Owing to the inadequate quality and quantity of the water available, these communities are forced to buy water at unaffordable rates[13] and Palestinians spend an average of 8 per cent of their monthly expenditure on purchasing water.

22. According to FAO, food insecurity levels among Palestinian households remained high during the reporting period, at 27 per cent (46 per cent in Gaza and 17 per cent in the West Bank).[14] Food insecurity in the Palestinian context is defined as the lack of economic access to food. In the West Bank, the prevalence of food insecurity among female-headed households is 10 percentage points higher than among male-headed households (25 per cent, compared with 15 per cent), while it is 3 percentage points higher for female-headed households in Gaza.[15]

23. Access to early learning opportunities in Palestine is low, with a 57.3 per cent enrolment rate in preschool education (57.7 per cent for boys and 56.9 per cent for girls). Levels of enrolment in basic education are higher: 95 per cent for girls and 93 per cent for boys. However, the net enrolment rate in secondary school is concerning, especially for boys: 59 per cent for boys and 77 per cent for girls in 2015.[16] Anecdotal evidence suggests that girls and children with disabilities are more prone to dropping out of school in areas where they feel unsafe in and on the way to school, such as in military zones and around checkpoints and settlements.

24. Rule of law remains a significant issue across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Palestinian women face specific challenges in accessing justice as a result of laws that discriminate on the basis of sex, notably with respect to inheritance, child custody and other personal status issues; women's limited knowledge of their rights and procedures; economic dependency; and social pressures and stigma. Even in cases where women manage to access justice services, they often face service providers who lack professional knowledge in dealing specifically with women and girl victims of violence, and who continue to interpret outdated laws pertaining to the Penal Code and personal status law in ways that infringe women's human rights. The State of Palestine has demonstrated its commitment to address women's access to justice through accession to seven human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was endorsed without reservations.

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[11] Consumption per person is 71 litres per day, as compared with the WHO recommendation of 100 litres per person per day — source: "WHO, Report of a field assessment of health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, 22 March to 1 April 2015 (2016).

[12] EWASH, Thirsting for Justice (January 2016).

[13] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview" (2015) p. 8.

[14] FAO, UNRWA, WFP and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Socioeconomic and food security survey 2014: West Bank and Gaza Strip" (unpublished information).

[15] Palestine Food Security Sector and Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, Socioeconomic and food security survey 2014 (May 2016).

[16] Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Baseline M&E report 2015 (2016).

25. In the State of Palestine, women and girls continue to experience multiple types of violence at home and in their communities, including structural violence in the form of discriminatory laws and traditional practices, and physical, economic and psychological violence from family members and intimate partners. Psychosocial violence continues to be the most reported type of violence in Gaza (55 per cent), while in the West Bank psychosocial violence comprise 30 per cent of reported cases, and cases of physical violence comprise another 30 per cent of reported cases. Overall, in 78.5 per cent of cases, the perpetrator was a spouse, parent or sibling, with spouses alone making up 67 per cent of all cases. In 84.3 per cent of cases where a woman was killed, the perpetrator was a family member. While domestic violence constitutes the most prevalent form of violence against women, it should be noted that merely 1.4 per cent of domestic violence cases reach the courts, with 57.6 per cent of women stating that social customs prevent them from filing a complaint.[17] There is also a severe lack of shelters and a social support system, which makes addressing violence against women particularly challenging.[18]

III. Assistance to Palestinian women

26. The United Nations continued its efforts to respond to a range of development and humanitarian challenges. Priorities for United Nations support to the Palestinian people are outlined in a set of key documents, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2014-2016 for the State of Palestine, which is aligned with the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016, and the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan, which outlines the humanitarian programming. An update on assistance provided by the United Nations system, in cooperation with the Government of Palestine, donors and civil society, to address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls in the following areas: education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; the rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development, is given in paragraphs 27-63 below.

A. Education and training

27. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives to promote women's and girls' access to education and training and improve learning environments. During the academic year 2015-2016, UNRWA operated 349 schools (252 in Gaza and 96 in the West Bank), serving over 290,400 students. In Gaza, 127,490 girls were enrolled in UNRWA schools (48.5 per cent of the student population), with an annual student increase of approximately 8,000 students. In the West Bank, 28,771 girls (58.8 per cent of the total) were enrolled in UNRWA schools. In addition to basic education, UNRWA continued to offer technical and vocational education training. During the reporting period, 540 girls (32 per cent of

[17] "UN-Women. Impact stories on ending violence against women — specialized prosecution", 2016, available from: http://palestine.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/10/spp#sthash.Fry1yfEu.dpuf.

[18] UNRWA GBV referral system — first quarter of 2016.

all students) in Gaza, and 567 girls (82 per cent of total) in the West Bank participated in such training.

28. In the West Bank, UNICEF and partners provided protective accompaniment presence to school children for safer commutes to school in locations with Israeli military presence and settlers. This benefited 4,667 children (1,670 girls and 2,997 boys) and 333 teachers (180 female and 153 male).

29. UNESCO and partners continued to promote early childhood education by conducting awareness-raising sessions on inclusive and child-friendly education for 980 mothers and training 120 female teachers. School principals and supervisors participated in the project training on inclusive education, action research and child-led activities, benefiting 17,810 female students in 49 schools in the West Bank and Gaza.

30. In East Jerusalem, UNDP in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) provided quality education and counselling services to nearly 8,500 female students in private schools.

31. In Gaza, UNDP has responded to the needs of girls in schools that were damaged during the 2014 conflict. The recovery process has considered and responded to girls' needs on the basis of the principles of building back better and child friendly schools. This includes the adaptation of the school premises, primarily with regard to water and sanitation facilities, to make them accessible to girls with special needs. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of 32 partially damaged educational institutions (12 public schools, 13 private schools and 7 universities/colleges) benefited 37,222 students (19,445 of whom were female).

32. ILO and partners supported 50 unemployed female university graduates from low-income households with skill-building training, followed by three-month temporary job placements in the private sector or community-based organizations. Around 25-30 per cent of the graduates found paid work and the majority indicated that their participation in the programme had increased their hope of finding longer-term employment. In partnership with the Islamic University of Gaza, ILO delivered furniture design training to 20 young female architects experiencing difficulty in finding employment in the architecture sector. Some 15 women architects were trained in basic business concepts, management and entrepreneurship skills and 18 female furniture design trainees received subsidized on-the-job training in furniture manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Gaza.

33. In Gaza, UNRWA enhanced the leadership skills of young women by providing female university graduates with skills that better meet the labour market needs. During the reporting period, 391 women and 34 men participated in the programme. Moreover, 724 young female graduates accessed job placement opportunities in civil society and the private sector.

B. Health

34. The United Nations continued to build upon good practices and results reported in the previous reporting period to improve the access to and the quality of health-care services. UNRWA remained the major provider of primary health-care services for Palestine refugees, operating 21 health centres in Gaza and 42 in the

West Bank. Palestine refugees, who constitute over 70 per cent of the population in Gaza, continued to rely on UNRWA for primary health care. In Gaza, the total number of medical consultations from October 2015 to June 2016 stood at 2,870,183, of which 60 per cent were for women, and 904,058 in the West Bank, where 59 per cent were for women.

35. Maternal and child health care continues to be an essential component of assistance. UNRWA provided assistance to 32,625 newly registered pregnant women, 218,661 women who were receiving antenatal care and 28,303 women who were receiving postnatal care services. A total of 94.8 per cent of all pregnant women paid at least four visits to UNRWA health centres during their pregnancies. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health and partner non-governmental organizations to reach and support a total of 3,532 "high-risk" women and their newborns under the postnatal home visiting programme in Gaza. Over 30,000 women have been reached with nutrition counselling and health education sessions. UNDP supported the rehabilitation of Al-Shifa and Al-Tahrir maternity hospitals, which served 16,000 women in Gaza City and Khan Younis during 2016. UNFPA supported the operation of mobile clinics in 12 communities in Gaza, with 3,681 women, including 1,654 pregnant women, benefiting from mobile clinic services.

36. UNRWA health clinics provided adolescent and adult women refugees with preventive and curative services, including screening for breast cancer and reproductive health-related services. UNDP in partnership with Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem launched a mobile mammography clinic initiative, while in Gaza, UNRWA launched a project to raise awareness of breast cancer. Through UNRWA health centres, 68,382 women were screened for breast cancer and 4,438 were referred for mammograms and scans.

37. UNDP upgraded specialized departments in three East Jerusalem hospitals, thereby allowing more than 6,500 women annually to benefit from improved conditions during the reporting period. It also supported tertiary treatment for vulnerable cardiac patients, including women in Gaza, through the rehabilitation of a floor of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and the construction of two operation rooms for cardiac care.

38. In the first half of 2016, 6,166 women and girls benefited from water network repairs and water tankering supported by UNICEF, while 10,500 women and girls benefited from improved sanitation services. Some 9,000 households in Gaza received e-vouchers for hygiene items and another 14,400 households were provided with sanitation and hygiene items.

39. United Nations entities continued to provide psychosocial support to women and girls across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. UN-Women provided group and individual psychosocial counselling to 1,800 women and girls displaced during the escalation of hostilities in 2014. Through the psychosocial counselling programme, 56 gender-based violence cases were referred to other service providers for further follow-up. In the West Bank, in 21 locations, UNRWA engaged family and child protection committees, which are composed of community-based organization representatives, UNRWA staff, community leaders and the popular refugee committees, to reach more than 6,300 women and girls with support group discussions and awareness-raising events. With UNICEF support, the Ministry of Social Development and other partners reached 32,417 children (of whom 49 per

cent were girls) with psychosocial support services, and 7,987 children (of whom 51 per cent were girls) with community-based child protection services, including in response to gender-based violence.

40. UN-Women provided physiotherapy, conducted by four women physiotherapists, to 16 women with disabilities and also provided necessary medical equipment. Some 30 women with disabilities received psychosocial and legal counselling in Gaza.

C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods

41. Within their development programming, United Nations entities continued to prioritize initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment and improve food security and livelihoods.

42. During the reporting period, UN-Women provided technical assistance to 45 women-led micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and 547 beneficiaries to enhance the competitiveness and marketability of their products locally, regionally and internationally through a comprehensive capacity-building, on-the-job coaching programme. Financial assistance was provided for 34 women-led micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

43. In a joint initiative by ILO and UN-Women, a participatory gender audit was conducted for two major Palestinian companies to enhance social responsibility and encourage a transformational change towards gender-responsive working environments.

44. FAO conducted several training sessions on marketing and bookkeeping for 90 women members of six women's cooperatives, to establish an effective finance and credit management system and links with reliable loan service providers. The training and workshops enhanced the women's capacity to manage loans. A total of 59 women from 10 women's cooperatives in the West Bank benefited from training focused on quality control, quality assurance and the application of local and international standards for food processing products.

45. The UNRWA job creation programme employed 17,063 refugees (of whom 26.4 per cent were female). The bulk of jobs (78.9 per cent) offered by the programme require unskilled labour; however, owing to social and cultural barriers, the programme faces challenges in finding culturally acceptable jobs for unskilled women. In the West Bank, the cash-for-work programme employed women as clerks, cleaners, guards, administrative assistants and tutors, among other roles. Over the reporting period, 8,124 labourers participated in the cash-for-work programme, of whom 41.2 per cent were female.

46. In Gaza, the enhanced UNRWA poverty assessment system makes it possible for vulnerable categories of women, such as women in polygamous marriages, widows, divorced women and women living in a state of separation from their husbands, to apply for an independent poverty assessment and receive food assistance from UNRWA separately from the male head of household. During the reporting period, 3,324 women applied for an assessment. Of the 2,082 cases already visited, 68.3 per cent qualified for assistance.

47. In the West Bank, UNRWA used a poverty-based targeting strategy for its social safety net programme that ranks households according to a variety of poverty-related elements. Of 7,613 households, 34 per cent are female-headed households and 55.3 per cent of beneficiaries are women. Priority interventions include essential food requirements, emergency cash intervention, referrals and in-house counselling.

48. Through general food distributions and vouchers, WFP ensured increased food consumption and dietary diversity for 294,818 female beneficiaries, 50 per cent of all beneficiaries. WFP food vouchers empower beneficiaries in managing household needs as they give them the freedom to choose which food commodities they want to buy. Women make the decisions on the use of the vouchers in 87 per cent of cases.

49. As part of reconstruction efforts in Gaza, UNDP provided transitional shelter cash assistance for 1,154 non-refugee families whose homes were damaged during the 2014 escalation of hostilities, with priority given to female-headed households, which comprise 10.7 per cent of the households in Gaza. In East Jerusalem, 150 Palestinian female-headed households benefited directly from improved living conditions through the rehabilitation of 250 homes.

50. ILO implemented a response programme in 2015 to train 50 women sheep breeders on management of sheep farms, life skills, financial and marketing literacy, cooperative work and business group formation. In the West Bank, FAO supported 85 women farmers with the construction of rainwater collection cisterns and facilitated land rehabilitation for five women farmers. In Gaza, FAO supported 65 female-headed households with vegetable and protein production units and rehabilitated 48 damaged animal shelters. In response to shocks, including unusual seasonal weather conditions in the West Bank, 71 women herders received drought-tolerant seeds to enhance their capacity to produce fodder for their animals. Some 30 animal shelters belonging to women herders were rehabilitated and FAO supported 240 women herders in the West Bank and Gaza by providing plastic sheeting for the winterization of animal shelters in preparation for cold weather conditions.

D. Rule of law and violence against women

51. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives designed to improve women's access to justice and enhance the capacity of institutions and personnel to prevent and respond to violence against women.

52. From January to June 2016, through the joint UNDP and UN-Women Rule of Law programme, in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 5,248 women received free legal aid and 1,778 received legal rights awareness training. In Gaza, 2,025 women received legal aid and 6,569 received legal rights awareness training. In Gaza, OHCHR conducted training on gender-based violence and the right to life for women's organizations and female traditional community leaders. During the reporting period, and particularly in the context of the aftermath of the 2014 conflict, 2,749 internally displaced persons, including 123 sexual and gender-based violence survivors, received legal assistance through 10 legal aid clinics and 3 additional mobile aid clinics.

53. Through humanitarian response interventions implemented by United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations, 2,564 survivors of gender-based violence (including 107 men) accessed legal services; 2,645 survivors (2,521 women, 124 men) received psychosocial support services; and 19,904 people (17,094 women, 2,810 men) attended gender-based violence awareness-raising sessions or received information on related services. UNRWA continued to operate a gender-based violence referral system in Gaza and the West Bank providing services for Palestinian refugees. During the reporting period, 2,138 gender-based violence cases were identified in Gaza, 92.8 per cent of them against women. At total of 7,129 psychosocial counselling sessions were accessed by gender-based violence survivors and 994 women received legal counselling. In the West Bank, 309 women and girl survivors received support through the community mental health programme, through the mother-to-mother groups and through medical and school counsellors. A total of 11 cases of child marriage were identified through the gender-based violence referral system.

54. During the reporting period, UN-Women worked to improve the quality of services provided to women victims and survivors of gender-based violence in Gaza, with a special focus on internally displaced women. UN-Women interventions reached more than 5,736 beneficiaries (5,194 women and 542 men) with awareness-raising sessions on gender-based violence and related services. UN-Women and civil society partners, mainly the Al-Hayat Centre, the Arab Women's Forum and Wifaq Association, provided more than 131 women victims of gender-based violence with case management support. The Hayat Centre also supported vulnerable and at-risk groups such as women in conflict with the law (17 women) and children of divorced couples (20 children) with case management and reintegration services. UNFPA provided training for 800 service providers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on gender-based violence "detection", response and referral, utilizing the guidelines developed and the Palestinian national referral system. UNFPA supported the establishment of a "one-stop" centre in Jabalia in Gaza, as a pilot phase to serve as a safe space for gender-based violence survivors.

55. UNICEF and UNFPA further supported the development of standard operating procedures for gender-based violence and child protection case management and referral in Gaza. Some 160 Ministry of Social Development social workers, 61 Ministry of Education and Higher Education school counsellors and 38 Ministry of Health medical staff received orientation on the standard operating procedures, detection of gender-based violence and referrals.

56. UNODC continued to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior and the Palestinian Civil Police to manage, administer, deliver and expand forensic medicine and forensic science services in accordance with international standards, including with regard to the investigation of cases of gender-based violence. Seven Palestinian doctors continued their specialized training programme in forensic medicine, including the forensic examination of victims of sexual and gender-based violence. UNODC also conducted awareness workshops on gender-based violence and child abuse recognition and response for forensic medicine practitioners, the High Judicial Council, UNRWA refugee camp clinics, local non-governmental organizations and line ministries related to the national referral system for gender-based violence service providers in the State of Palestine.

E. Power and decision-making

57. During the reporting period, UN-Women enhanced women's political participation and leadership by providing technical assistance to 20 female local council members. Of these women, aged 25-45 years, 15 became active members in their councils and villages, voicing women's priorities and needs at local council meetings. In addition, UNDP established and institutionalized local economic development units in five medium-sized municipalities in Gaza, in which women have been assigned as specialists and focal points.

58. In UNRWA schools, 1,964 female students from 132 girls' elementary and preparatory schools participated in the school parliament programme. Female students discussed and engaged peers on a number of issues relating to gender equality, such as reproductive health and early marriage. In the West Bank, UNRWA conducted awareness-raising activities for 435 participants from local communities on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

59. In 2016, UNICEF and local partners reached 6,747 disadvantaged adolescents (48.5 per cent of whom were female) from vulnerable communities with life skills programmes. Nearly 80 per cent of adolescent girls and boys from UNICEF-supported life skills projects are involved in and leading community initiatives. These projects equipped girls with important leadership skills for their participation in decision-making and community life.

F. Institutional development

60. During the reporting period, OHCHR continued to support the State of Palestine in strengthening its capacity to implement and report under the seven human rights treaties to which it has acceded, while addressing gender-based discrimination as a cross-cutting issue. OHCHR support included technical assistance through training and bilateral discussions with line ministries on treaty provisions, general comments and reporting guidelines. UN-Women and OHCHR supported the State of Palestine and the Independent Commission for Human Rights with technical assistance and resources to hold a national consultation on the draft State party report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. About 140 representatives of civil society organizations from both the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip attended the consultation. OHCHR and UN-Women also conducted a training for civil society organizations in Gaza and the West Bank on their role in the human rights treaty reporting and implementation process, which included technical discussions on using national consultations and shadow reporting to advocate for and promote women's human rights.

61. With support from ILO and in consultation with tripartite constituents, the social security law for private sector workers and their family members was adopted, and signed by the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, on 7 March 2016. The law includes maternity protection insurance, which will support increased women's labour force participation and encourage employers to employ more women, by transferring the financial burden of covering maternity leave benefit from the employer to the social security fund.

62. In August 2016, the Ministry of Women's Affairs launched the national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Developed by the High National Committee for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and supported by UN-Women and ESCWA, among others, the plan establishes a comprehensive action framework in support of the efforts of the Palestinian Government, civil society and women's organizations to make the participation of women and the inclusion of their perspectives and needs in peace, security and humanitarian processes a reality.

63. Under the joint rule of law programme, UNDP and UN-Women provided support to justice and security institutions to mainstream a gender perspective in policies and procedures, including in the area of legislative drafting. The Palestinian Civil Police were supported in developing the first police gender strategy in the Arab region; the Council of Ministers held a series of national consultations for the finalization of the Family Protection Bill, which addresses domestic violence; and the Attorney General formalized a unit of Specialized Prosecutors for Protection of Family from Violence and appointed 19 specialized prosecutors, who receive continuing support from the joint programme. The joint programme provided technical support to the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior for the review and development of the social protection, justice and security sector strategies as well as technical support to the State of Palestine in the reporting process to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It also supported the Palestinian Civil Police in the refurbishment of one of its buildings to become a centre for women and girls victims of violence.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

64. **In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, fragmentation of the territory, lack of Palestinian unity, restrictions on access and movement, increased settlement expansion and violence and the closure of Gaza continued to impact negatively on the situation of Palestinian women. In Gaza, the humanitarian situation remains dire. The slow pace of recovery from the 2014 conflict is concerning and has exacerbated many of the protection concerns and challenges faced by women and girls described in previous reports. These include increased psychosocial stress, high unemployment rates, lack of livelihood opportunities, food insecurity, limited access to basic services, poor access to water, sanitation and energy, high rates of violence against women and lack of access to justice. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the surge in demolitions of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures during the reporting period and the associated displacement aggravated existing protection concerns. Restrictions on the freedom of movement continued to impact negatively on women's and girls' access to basic services, education and livelihood opportunities.**

65. **The rule of law remains a significant issue across the State of Palestine, with women and girls continuing to face significant challenges in accessing justice, including as a result of laws that discriminate on the basis of sex. More effort is needed to bring legislative frameworks into alignment with international human rights instruments such as the Convention on the**

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The preparation of the Palestine State Party report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women presents an important milestone in support of increased accountability of national systems with regard to women's human rights and gender equality, and in identifying and addressing discrimination against women, both in law and in practice. Areas where legislative reform must clearly be undertaken in order to achieve substantive equality include: adopting the Family Protection Bill, which protects women from domestic violence; revising the personal status law to align with obligations under the Convention related to equality in inheritance, divorce and child custody, among other issues; and revising the penal code to remove all references to mitigating circumstances in sentencing for family-related killings (so called "honour killings") and to introduce sentences for different types of sexual and gender-based violence.

66. **To advance the realization of women's human rights, continued technical support should be provided to Palestinian actors to fully engage with human rights treaty bodies and other relevant processes, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Human Rights Council and its special procedures, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.**[19] **Technical support should be provided to women's organizations to facilitate their participation in human rights processes and to ensure stronger collaboration between women's organizations and mainstream human rights organizations in engaging with the Human Rights Council.**

67. **Violence against women remains a serious protection concern in the State of Palestine and the situation is particularly acute in Gaza. In support of the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women, the United Nations should build on efforts under way and continue to implement initiatives to improve women's access to justice and enhance the capacity of institutions and personnel to prevent and respond to violence against women. United Nations entities together with all key actors should support the implementation of a coordinated holistic, multisectoral approach to respond to violence against women and ensure availability of health care, psychosocial and legal assistance and counselling and economic empowerment, in line with the recommendations of the midterm review of the National Strategy.**

68. **United Nations system entities should increase prevention efforts, including initiatives aimed at mitigating the impact of the occupation and conflict on the increasing vulnerability and exposure of women and girls to violence, including settler violence, displacement, home demolitions and restrictions on movement.**

69. **Improving women's economic security and rights is key to supporting women's empowerment and protection at large. Policies aimed at expanding**

[19] In the context of the preliminary examination into the situation of Palestine, the Office of the Prosecutor has called upon interested parties to submit information on violations of women's rights in respect of crimes within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

local production and creating jobs should support women's local production quality standards to enhance their potential to compete locally. Exploring opportunities for women's engagement in new economic sectors such as the information technology, manufacturing and tourism sectors would maximize opportunities for women's economic participation. As a further means of guiding young students and graduates away from an overcrowded professional sector, career counselling and technical and vocational education training services should be provided to enhance the attractiveness of technical careers. This should be coupled with making labour market information and job search mechanisms available to disadvantaged and marginalized female youth. In Gaza, given women's limited participation and economic opportunities to date, more attention must be paid to strengthening their participation in and opportunities generated by post-conflict recovery and reconstruction efforts.

70. Prospects of national and local elections continue to be a great challenge and women remain underrepresented in decision-making bodies at various levels of public life, the peace processes and national reconciliation efforts. It is therefore crucial to support long-term sustainable mechanisms to enhance the political representation and leadership of Palestinian women in a way that would set women's issues high on the national agenda. Consciousness of political rights and the building of transformative communities are significant conditions for creating an enabling environment that can influence the direction of politics and development in favour of women.

71. The United Nations continues to support the realization of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The promotion of women's human rights and empowerment remains essential to these efforts. The national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, launched by the State of Palestine in 2016, establishes a comprehensive action framework for making the participation of women and the inclusion of their perspectives and needs in peace, security and humanitarian processes a reality. The United Nations should support the implementation and monitoring of the national action plan and, in addition, utilize the opportunities presented by Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) for bringing violations of human rights and humanitarian law experienced by Palestinian women to the attention of the Security Council, including through the briefings of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

72. The overall increase in politically motivated violence during the reporting period is concerning, further threatening the prospects of peace. Finding a political solution to the conflict remains essential.